

I. DESCRIPTION OF GORGES STATE PARK

LOCATION AND ACCESS

Gorges State Park is located in southwestern Transylvania County along the North Carolina - South Carolina state line. The park is approximately 45 miles southwest of Asheville.

The park's mailing address and telephone number are:

Gorges State Park
P.O. Box 100
Sapphire, North Carolina 28774-0100
(828) 966-9099

Access to Gorges State Park is provided by US 64 which runs along the park's northern boundary and NC 281 (Bohaynee Road) along its western boundary. From the south, SC 130 leads north to the park. SC 130 becomes NC 281 at the state line. The Grassy Ridge Access is located off NC 281 about seven miles north of the state line. The Frozen Creek Access is located on the eastern side of the park off Frozen Creek Road. Frozen Creek Road connects the park to US 64. (Figure I-1)

PARK LAND

The recently created state park contains 7,172 acres of rugged and mountainous land. Plunging waterfalls, steep topography, river gorges, rock outcroppings and one of the greatest concentrations of rare and unique species in the eastern United States are found within the park. An elevation change of over 2,000 feet in a little over three miles combines with rainfall in excess of 80 inches to create a unique environment that supports rare plants and animals and diverse natural communities.

VISITOR FACILITIES

Gorges State Park is in its early stages of development. Following its creation as a state park in 1999, the Division of Parks and Recreation contracted for the development of a master plan for the park. After considerable public input, that plan was adopted in February 2003. Capital development projects that are planned are described in Chapter VII of this general management plan.

Existing facilities at the park are very limited at this time. However, some access is provided so that visitors may enjoy hiking, primitive camping, biking, fishing, horseback riding and picnicking. (Figure I-1)

From the Grassy Ridge Access area, hikers may backpack into the Ray Fisher Place campground where six primitive campsites are available. Each campsite contains a picnic table, fire ring and lantern hook. Pit toilets are also available. Campers must sign in at the registration area located at the Grassy Ridge parking lot trailhead. Primitive camping is also available near the southern park

Legend

- Backcountry Camping
- Hiking
- Multipurpose Trail
- Hiking, biking, horseback riding trail - - - - -
- * Overlook
- Park Boundary - . - . - .
- Park Entrance
- P Parking
- Park Office
- Picnicking
- Powerline
- Restrooms
- Roads = = = = =
- State Line - - - - -
- H Transylvania Community Hospital - (828) 884-9111
- Waterways ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Hiking Trails

Trail Name	Difficulty	Distance	Blazing
Auger Hole	moderate	6.0 miles	red squares
Bearwallow Falls	strenuous	1.6 miles	blue circles
Bearwallow Valley	moderate	1.25 miles	red circles
Buckberry Ridge	easy	.75 miles	white circles
Canebrake	strenuous	5.0 miles	yellow squares
Foothills	strenuous	6.7 miles	white slash
Ray Fisher Place	moderate	2.7 miles	green circles

* Mileage listed for Foothills Trail is distance within park boundary only.

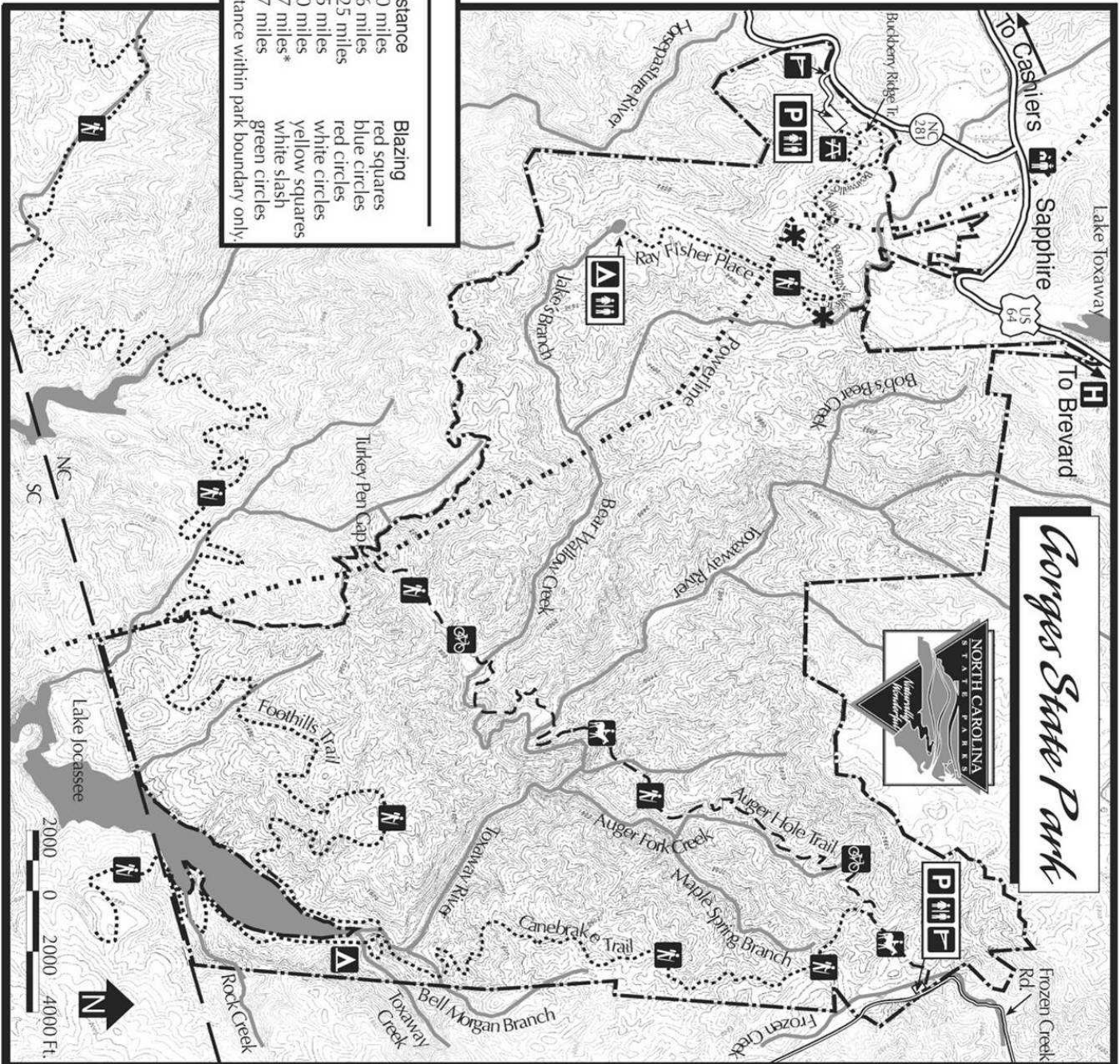
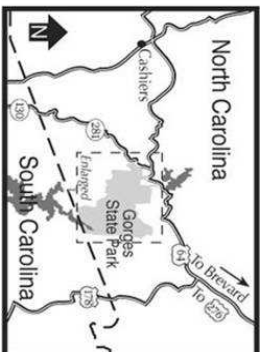


Figure I-1. Gorges State Park

boundary along the Foothills Trail.

Streams and rivers in the park are designated Wild Trout Waters, and regulations of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission apply. An ample supply of rainbow and brown trout, as well as smallmouth bass, attract fishermen to the park's variety of fish habitats. Lake Jocassee, a deep lake lying in both North and South Carolina, is a haven for trout and bass fishermen. Boat access to Lake Jocassee is available within Devil's Fork State Park in South Carolina.

Due to the steep topography and swift water currents, no swimming is allowed in the park's rivers and creeks. Fishermen should be careful to avoid dangerous areas above waterfalls.

The park's rugged mountain terrain will challenge any outdoor enthusiast. Views of dazzling waterfalls, mountain forests and rare vegetation, and scenic vistas may be experienced along the park's steep, backwoods trails. The popular Foothills Trail, established by Duke Energy Corporation, enters and exits the park along its southern boundary. Its trailhead is located at the Frozen Creek Access area in Rosman on Frozen Creek Road. The Frozen Creek Access area also provides parking and picnicking. From the Grassy Ridge Access, a trail leads to a small observation platform that overlooks a long cascade on Bearwallow Creek. Grassy Ridge also has picnic tables and port-a-johns. Horses and mountain bikes are currently permitted on the Auger Hole Trail from Frozen Creek Access to Turkey Pen Gap on the western boundary of the park.

Until a park visitor center is constructed, the interim park office is located near the intersection of US 64 and NC 281.

HISTORY OF THE PARK AREA

European exploration of southwestern North Carolina likely began with the explorations of Hernando DeSoto in 1540 and Juan Pardo in 1566 (DePratter et al. 1985; Hudson et al. 1984). The expeditions came into frequent contact with Indian towns, villages and agricultural fields. After the Spanish exploration, many years apparently passed without outside intervention. Even so, the early expeditions had a profound and lasting effect by introducing old world diseases that decimated native populations. Spanish claims to the area were eventually relinquished, and British slowly began to move into the area after 1670.

Early settlers were primarily involved with trading with the Indians. Both English and Native Americans used long-established trails such as the ancient Estatoe Trail, a trading route between mountain settlements of the Cherokee that passed from the area to their town Estatoe, in what is now South Carolina.

The provincial legislature of North Carolina passed laws to promote settlement of these remote areas of the colony. South Carolina and Georgia also lay claims to the area and its lucrative deer-skin trade. Eventually the area began to be seen as valuable for more than trading, and by the 1740s more settlers, including Scotch and Irish immigrants, settled in the area.

In 1763, in an effort to establish peace with the Cherokee and other Indian tribes, British law

established that all of western North Carolina was Indian Territory and outside British Territory. There was also concern by the British that settlers, located in the area far from British control and taxation, would not consider themselves British subjects.

All was not peaceful with the Cherokee, however, and near the beginning of the American Revolution, North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee sent troops that burned homes and crops, killed many Indians and even took a few as slaves. By the late 1700s, settlers began to push westward as well as northward from South Carolina. Cherokee land holdings were gradually reduced by various land cessions with the British and then the United States between 1721 and 1835 (Encyclopedia of North American Indians).

In the spring of 1776, botanist William Bartram traveled through nearby Macon County and wrote detailed descriptions of the land. His accounts were later published in his 1791 book *Travels*. Bartram, America's first native born naturalist/artist, portrayed nature through both scientific observation and personal experience. His still popular book provides descriptions of relatively pristine western North Carolina and other states as they existed at that time as well as his accounts of Native American life (Bartram Trail Conference).

The Meigs-Freeman Indian Boundary of 1802, which ran along the northern side of the Tuckasegee River, clarified that most of what was to become Transylvania County was in control of the United States. Disputes over the area between Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina continued before being settled in 1811 and 1815. In the end, a boundary was established at approximately the 35th parallel, although surveying it proved very difficult because of the mountain terrain and difficult angles (Blackburn, 1995).

About this time the oldest known standing farmhouse in western North Carolina was built, the Allison-Deaver House. The house, located in Pisgah Forest in Transylvania County, was never altered over the years with improvements such as electrical wiring, plumbing, heating, insulation or closets. Timbers for the house were cut in 1815 and for the barn in 1827. (www.visitnc.com)

President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act on May 28, 1830. The act formalized US policy of sending Indians living east of the Mississippi to the west. In the decade following the Act, the US Government attempted to remove southeastern tribes through treaties negotiated in "an atmosphere of intimidation and coercion." In 1835, the Treaty of New Echota, signed by a small percentage of the Cherokee Nation, resulted in most Cherokees being removed and relocated to Oklahoma (Encyclopedia of North American Indians). Rather than leave, some chose to hide out in the mountains and forests, and in 1842 those Cherokees still living in North Carolina were granted permission to stay. It was not until 1930 that Congress finally ruled that members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians were entitled to both North Carolina and United States citizenship. Cherokee names are still used for places throughout western North Carolina. In Transylvania, some of the names still in use are Toxaway, Connestee, Estatoe and Selica.

As North Carolina developed, the land that was to become Transylvania County was part of several different counties, including old Tryon County and Burke, Buncombe, Henderson and Jackson counties. In 1861, Representative Joseph P. Jordan, who was born on a farm near Blantyre, introduced a bill in the N.C. House of Commons to create a new county from Henderson and Jackson

counties. Jordan chose the name “Transylvania” a combination of two Latin words: *trans*, meaning “across”, and *sylva*, meaning “woods” (Powell, 1968). Brevard was chosen as the name for a new town which was to be the county seat. It was named for Ephrian Brevard (1744-81), a teacher and revolutionary surgeon and secretary of the convention that drafted the Mecklenburg Resolves (Powell, 1968). The bill to create Transylvania County was passed by both houses on February 15, 1861, the same day that North Carolina joined the Confederacy. The county’s name remains appropriate today for a county that includes Gorges State Park, DuPont State Forest and portions of the Pisgah and Nantahala national forests.

Early Transylvania County had few roads, and transportation was by foot, horse and ox drawn carriages, often along old Indian trails that became widened. Initially, no market for timber existed, just cutting and burning to clear land for farming. The French Broad River proved to be inadequate for floating timber to Asheville and for navigable purposes, and most marketing was by wagon into parts of South Carolina. Timbering, mining and other prosperous endeavors would not come to the area until railroads arrived and improved transportation.

The first railroad to Transylvania County came in 1895, running from Hendersonville to Brevard. The county financed construction by voting for \$60,000 in bonds, the first ever issued by the county. To extend the railroad to present-day Rosman in 1900, the county approved \$25,000 more in bonds. With the presence of the railroad, lumber mills began operating and employment other than farming was possible. (Mountain Area Information Network, 2000-2001)

Western North Carolina is closely associated with the history of forestry in America. In 1889 George Vanderbilt began purchasing land in the Asheville area for what was to become his Biltmore estate. Vanderbilt hired the renowned Frederick Law Olmstead to design the grounds and gardens of the huge estate. Olmstead recommended that Vanderbilt hire a forest manager, and Vanderbilt hired Gifford Pinchot and charged him with restoring the forest. In 1895, Dr. Carl Schenck came from Germany to replace Pinchot and for 14 years worked to restore forest lands that today form much of the Pisgah National Forest. A school of forestry was established at Biltmore in 1898. These early forestry restoration and education efforts became the beginning of forestry conservation in America.

Today, the Cradle of Forestry in America is a 6,500-acre historic site established by Congress to commemorate the beginning of forestry conservation in the United States. Located in northern Transylvania County, it features an educational film, interactive exhibits, guided trails, historical buildings, a 1915 Climax logging locomotive, an old sawmill, and special programs and events. (www.cradleofforestry.com)

Transylvania County has a long history of tourism. About 1860, at an area now known as Rockbrook, a hotel was built. It was burned during the Civil War. Around 1890, J. Frances Hayes, a wealthy Pennsylvania railroad man, came to Transylvania County for health reasons. He founded the Toxaway Company and began building resorts in the area: Fairfield Inn and Fairfield Lake (1896) and the Sapphire Inn in Jackson County, the Franklin Hotel in Brevard, and the Toxaway Lake and Toxaway Inn. (www.breedloveproperties.com) He also started what would later become the Western NC Resort District.

In addition to having commercial purposes, the railroad served to bring some of the nation’s

wealthiest families to vacation in the area. The original Toxaway Inn, built in 1901 and the 540 acre Lake Toxaway, completed in 1903, became a popular resort for America's wealthy and famous (Powell, 1968). Before the railroad was extended to Rosman and Lake Toxaway, the Toxaway Company built a "turnpike" road from Brevard to Lake Toxaway (Mountain Area Information Network, 2000-2001). Advertised as "The Switzerland of America", the Lake Toxaway Inn flourished as a resort from 1903 until flooding burst the dam in 1916. Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, Edward Baccus, John D. Rockefeller, R.J. Reynolds, the Vanderbilts, the Dukes, and the Wannamakers all visited. Guests could boat, swim, play tennis, golf, fish, hunt and horseback ride. Cultural events were also offered.

About 1900 industrialist Joseph S. Silversteen came to Transylvania County and established operations at Rosman. Rosman, incorporated in 1901 as Toxaway (Cherokee for "redbird") had its name changed to Estatoe in 1903 and then to Rosman in 1905. His influence in the area is evidenced by the renaming of Estatoe to Roseman: Silversteen compounded the name of two of his associates, Rosenthal and Ormanský (Powell, 1968). Silversteen founded the Gloucester Lumber Company and a number of tanneries. Gloucester Lumber Company logged the watershed of the French Broad River's headwaters, south of Vanderbilt's land. In 1910, Silversteen acquired approximately 30,000 acres of land from George Vanderbilt, whose inherited fortune had shrunk due to bad investing.

Logging practices of the early 1900's often scarred the land, silted the creeks, and destroyed acres of wildlife habitat. Over the years, forests slowly reclaimed many farms and most of the cut-over land. In 1914, the U.S. Forest Service bought 78,410 acres of forest from the Vanderbilt estate. This land later became part of the Pisgah National Forest, established in 1916. It was the first national forest in the country created from purchased land. (USDA, 2001)

One of the most damaging interferences to the Gorges environment occurred in 1916 when the dam containing Lake Toxaway – the largest private lake in the state – broke. In July of 1916, much of western North Carolina had experienced extensive flooding, and by August, swollen watercourses were pouring into Lake Toxaway, straining the 60-foot high earthen dam. On August 14th the dam burst, not unexpectedly, and over five billion gallons of water are estimated to have rushed downstream, destroying communities in its path, uprooting trees, scouring the gorges and leaving piles of debris 15 to 20 feet high. Remarkably, no one was killed (www.breedloveproperties.com). These debris piles still remain.

As a result of the 1916 flood, the once flourishing Toxaway Inn went out of business. Not long thereafter, the country moved into the Great Depression, and the area's tourism languished. Public works programs arising from the Great Depression did construct outdoor recreation facilities and work on conservation projects, but it would be many years before tourism recovered. The Blue Ridge Parkway, one of those projects, opened its first sections in 1939. Rural electric associations brought electricity to western North Carolina, and the area slowly recovered. The Lake Toxaway area was purchased and the lake restored in 1961, and Lake Toxaway once again became popular as a resort and mountain vacation destination.

The Singer Sewing Machine Company assembled large tracts of land in the Gorges State Park area and logged much of it. Then, in the 1940s and 1950s, Singer sold the land to Duke Energy Corporation. The corporation purchased the land for its steep topography and high rainfall, which

offered opportunities for development of hydropower projects. Crescent Land and Timber Corporation, a subsidiary of Duke Energy, managed the land, closing some roads and limiting human access to protect the environment.

Conservation studies began in the area in the late 1970s, and in 1982 nearly 275 acres of land that are currently in the park were placed on the NC Registry of Natural Heritage Areas because of the numerous rare species. In the late 1990s, Duke Energy determined that it no longer needed large portions of the Gorges for future hydropower and offered the land for sale to natural resources agencies in North and South Carolina. The NC General Assembly authorized the creation of a new state park and adjacent state game land in 1999, and 10,000 acres were purchased by the state and divided: 7,100 for Gorges State Park and 2,900 for the state game land. *Gorges State Park Master Plan* was developed with considerable public input and adopted in February, 2003. The plan will serve to guide land acquisition and development of the park.

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